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ABSTRACT

This analysis, part of a series on child poverty in America, contains an overview of child poverty trends over the period from 1959 to 1992 and projections of child poverty rates and levels by area of residence to the year 2010. Analyses, based on data from the Census Bureau, show a marked increase in the overall rate of child poverty since the early 1970s, as well as increases across inner-city, suburban, and rural areas. Data show that the increase in child poverty in urban areas, especially the suburbs, has been dramatic. Also, accompanying the large increase in poverty in the urban areas is a somewhat smaller, though still quite large, increase in rural child poverty. Projections of child poverty rates and levels by area of residence to the year 2010 show the variation likely to occur over the next two decades if trends continue. It is projected that an additional 6 million children will be living in poverty in urban areas by the year 2010, a 57 percent increase, with the largest growth in suburban poverty (54 percent of the total urban increase). The number of poor children in the suburbs will increase by about 74 percent while the number of poor children in the inner city will increase by 44.4 percent. The poverty rate for inner cities and suburbs combined will increase to 28 percent in 2010. The number of poor rural children will increase by about 8 percent even though the rural child population will decline by 13 percent. Twenty figures and three tables, and a table in an appendix, present trend data. (Contains 22 references.) (SLD)

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Two Americas

Comparisons of U.S. Child Poverty in Rural, Inner City and Suburban Areas

A Linear Trend Analysis to the Year 2010

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Two Americas

Comparisons of U.S. Child Poverty in Rural, Inner City and Suburban Areas

A Linear Trend Analysis to the Year 2010

John T. Cook
J. Larry Brown

Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy

September 1994
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About the Center

The Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy was established at Tufts University in 1990. Its purpose is to promote public policy choices which reduce hunger and poverty, and enhance the development and productive capacities of American families and children. The Center carries out policy research and analyses, and works with governmental leaders and the media, to promote greater understanding of policy alternatives for the nation.

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Other Reports in the Two Americas Series.

Two Americas: Alternative Futures for Child Poverty in the U.S. (January 1993).

Two Americas: Alternative Futures for Child Poverty in the U.S. *National and State Projections to the Year 2010* (April 1993).

Two Americas: Racial Differences in Child Poverty in the U.S. *A Linear Trend Analysis to the Year 2010* (October 1993).

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FOREWORD

This analysis is part of a "Two Americas" series on child poverty in America. During the course of the past two years the Center has produced analyses of various child poverty trends, and social and economic policy choices available to policymakers to help reduce poverty among the nation's children.

In earlier reports national- and state-level projections of child poverty were presented under two alternative futures. These futures are based on two identifiable trends in child poverty over the past three decades. One trend, during the 1960s, saw the number of children in poverty in the U.S. decline by 45 percent. The current trend, covering the past twenty years, has seen the number of American children in poverty increase by 47 percent. These trends reflect different combinations of economic growth and social policy which have existed during the post-war period.

Based on these very divergent trends in our recent history, the nation has before it an historically significant choice: take steps to reduce the threat of child poverty, as we once did so successfully, or see the trend of the past two decades push child poverty to the highest levels in modern history.

Description of the Analysis

This analysis has two parts. The first is an **overview of trends in child poverty over the period from 1959 to 1992** for children below the age of eighteen years. Census Bureau data on child poverty over the period 1959 to 1992 are presented, with details by area of residence for the period 1973-1992. These data show a marked increase in the overall rate of child poverty since the early 1970s, as well as increases across inner-city, suburban and rural areas. The data show that there has been a dramatic increase in child poverty in urban areas, especially in the suburbs. Moreover, the very large increases in child poverty in urban areas has been accompanied by a somewhat smaller, though still quite large, increase in rural child poverty over the period.

In the second part of this study we present **projections of child poverty rates and levels by area of residence to the year 2010**, based on the trend in child poverty data over the period 1973-1992[1]. The projections, based on Census Bureau data, show the variation

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[1] The analyses described in this report cover related children living in families. Related children in families comprise approximately 98 percent of all children in the U.S., and about 95 percent of all children in poverty.

likely to occur in child poverty within each area over the next two decades, if trends of the last two decades continue.

By viewing the future of child poverty across inner-city, suburban and rural areas, it is possible to see which areas are most likely to experience the greatest increases in child poverty, where social policies should be focused, and the likely outcomes if policymakers fail to avert the growth in child poverty manifest over the past twenty years.

Definitions and Data Sources for Child Poverty Rates

The definition of poverty used in this study is that used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The poverty level for an average four-person household in 1992 was $14,335. This analysis also utilizes the Census Bureau's definitions of areas of residence; metropolitan areas (urban), non-metropolitan areas (rural), metropolitan and within central cities (inner cities), and metropolitan but not in central cities (suburbs). When referring to "urban areas" in this report we mean Census Bureau metropolitan areas; when referring to "rural areas" we mean Census Bureau non-metropolitan areas; when referring to "inner cities" we mean Census Bureau's central cities; and when referring to "suburbs" we mean the part of metropolitan areas outside central cities. Urban areas, therefore, are comprised exactly of inner cities plus suburbs, and these two areas are mutually exclusive[2]. These conventions are used by most researchers and analysts (e.g., the Rural Sociological Society's Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty).

All data used in the analyses herein are from the Census Bureau's March Current Population Survey, and can be found in existing Census Bureau publications in the P-60 Series. Most of the data are listed in tables contained in Series P-60, No. 98,

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[2] In 1985 the Census Bureau updated the geographic definitions of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas used in the Current Population Survey (CPS) sampling frame based on results from the 1980 decennial census. As a result, estimates of poverty levels prior to 1985 are not strictly comparable to estimates produced from the CPS after 1985. The differences arise from variation in the proportion of the population living in metropolitan areas according to the CPS and other independent Census Bureau estimates. The post-1984 CPS metropolitan population estimates have consistently been higher than other independent estimates produced by the Census Bureau. For example, from July 1985 to August 1986, the magnitude of the monthly metropolitan population estimates from the CPS ranged from 0.4 to 1.0 percentage points higher than the independent estimates (See Current Population Reports Series P-60, No. 158, Appendix A for additional details). To avoid error resulting from this variation, the analyses in this report are based on poverty rates, which are not affected in the same way by changes in metro-nonmetro definitions.

"Characteristics of the Low-Income Population: 1973" and Series P-60, No. 185, "Poverty in the United States: 1992." The most recent year for which national child poverty data are available from the Census Bureau is 1992.

There are some criticisms that the current federal poverty definition and thresholds are inadequate for measuring "actual" economic deprivation among the American population[3]. In spite of these criticisms, some of which are valid, Census Bureau poverty data are the most authoritative. They are based on the federal definitions of income and poverty, and are the most readily available, most regularly updated, and the most widely used and accepted. Because they also yield comparative data over several decades, we rely on Census Bureau data in this study.

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[3] For an excellent review of the issues and problems associated with current poverty definitions and thresholds see Ruggles, P., (1990), Drawing the Line: Alternative Poverty Measures and Their Implications for Public Policy, The Urban Institute Press. Also see U.S. Bureau of the Census, (1992), Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 182-RD, Measuring the Effects of Benefits and Taxes on Income and Poverty: 1979 to 1991, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

SUMMARY AND PROJECTION OF CHILD POVERTY TRENDS

Poverty is a problem of growing proportions which impacted nearly 14 million American children in 1992. Policy decisions made by Congress and the Administration will help determine whether child poverty is dramatically reduced over coming years, or will reach heights unparalleled in recent decades.

During the 1960s the number of children living in poverty in the U.S. was reduced by almost eight million, or 45 percent. The poverty rate for children in America fell from 26.9 percent in 1960, to 14 percent in 1969, a reduction of 48 percent.

Over the period from 1973 to 1992, the number of American children living in poverty increased by 46.8 percent. More than 4.4 million more children lived in impoverished families in 1992 than in 1973. Moreover, this trend continued even during the periods of economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s. Examination of child poverty over this period reveals the following.

Rural-Urban Child Poverty: 1973-1992

* **From 1973 to 1992, the proportion of all American children in poverty, regardless of area of residence, increased by 48.9 percent (from 14.2 to 21.1 percent).**

* **Over this period, the proportion of children in poverty in urban areas (inner cities and suburbs combined) increased by 58.7 percent (from 13.1 to 20.7 percent).**

  - **The largest rate of growth in child poverty over the past two decades has been in the suburbs.**

  - **The poverty rate among children living in suburbs increased by 76.4 percent over this period (from 7.8 to 13.8 percent).**

  - **The proportion of children living in inner cities who were impoverished increased by 55.9 percent (from 20.4 to 31.9 percent).**

* **The proportion of children living in poverty in rural areas increased by 35.6 percent from 1973 to 1992 (from 16.6 to 22.5 percent).**

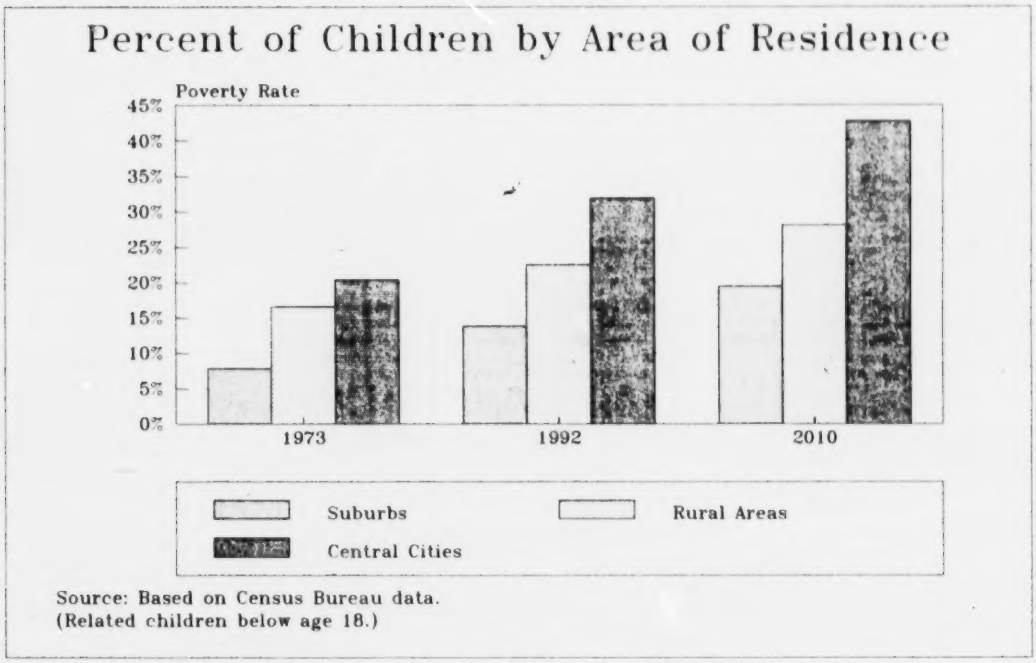
  - **By 1992, 22.5 percent of all rural children were in poverty, compared to 20.7 percent of urban children, and 21.1 percent of all children combined.**

Projected Rural-Urban Child Poverty: 2010

If child poverty trends continue over the next twenty years as they did over the period 1973-1992, America's children may be headed for problems of extraordinary proportions.

* **An additional 6.0 million children will be living in poverty in urban areas by the year 2010, a 57 percent increase.**
  - **The largest growth in child poverty will be in suburban areas (an additional 3.2 million, or 54 percent of the total urban increase), while the number of children in poverty in the inner cities will increase by 2.7 million (46 percent of the overall urban increase).**
  - **The number of poor children living in suburbs will increase by nearly three-fourths (74 percent) by the year 2010.**
  - **The number of inner-city poor children will increase by 44.4 percent over the same period.**
* **The poverty rate for all children living in urban areas (inner cities and suburbs combined) will increase by 35 percent, from 20.7 percent in 1992 to 28.0 percent in 2010.**
  - **The poverty rate for children in the suburbs will increase by 41.3 percent, from 13.8 percent in 1992 to 19.5 percent in 2010.**
  - **The poverty rate for inner-city children will increase by 33.8 percent, from 31.9 percent in 1992 to 42.7 percent in 2010.**
* **The number of poor rural children will increase by about 8 percent (approximately one quarter million more) by 2010, even though the rural child population will decline by 13 percent (about 2.0 million).**
* **The poverty rate for rural children will increase by 25 percent, from 22.5 percent in 1992 to 28.1 percent in 2010.**
* **If current trends continue, the number of children in poverty in America's suburbs will surpass child poverty levels in the inner cities by the year 2030.**

Trends in U.S. Child Poverty, 1973–2016



Source: Based on Census Bureau data.
(Related children below age 18.)

Today, millions of American children live in a distinctly different country, a land of poverty. During the 1960s the number of children living in poverty was reduced by nearly half (Cook and Brown, 1993a and 1993b). However, analysis of trends in child poverty over the past two decades shows that the large reductions in child poverty achieved during the 1960s were largely reversed during the last two and a half decades. The proportion of children in poverty increased dramatically within all areas of residence between 1973 and 1992, with poverty rates among suburban and inner-city children seeing the largest increases (see figure above).

If the trends of the period 1973 to 1992 continue over the next two decades, child poverty will increase dramatically, especially within suburban and inner-city areas (see figure above). Moreover, under these conditions well over a quarter (28 percent) of all children living in urban areas, more than one in four (43 percent of) inner-city children and one in five (19.5 percent of) suburban children will be impoverished by the end of the first decade of the twenty first century. Economic and policy decisions made during the next year or two may determine the future reality for American children, regardless of their area of residence.

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL CHILD POVERTY TRENDS BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Child Poverty Threatens the Well-being of Children and the Nation

Poverty may be the single most important factor in producing outcomes we fear most for our young. The high correlation of poverty with poor health, drugs, and school failure, for example, suggests that attempts to improve the condition of childhood in America must start with efforts to reduce poverty. Probably more than any other factor, poverty limits the capacity of families, and begins harming the young before they are born. Without productive and healthy families, children experience significantly diminished opportunity through cognitive impairment, inadequate education, lack of basic skills, reduced productivity, and increased morbidity and mortality.

For more than twenty years child poverty in America has been increasing, presenting peril to our children and to the moral and economic strength of our country. Concern about the upward trend in child poverty is being expressed by a growing number of leaders from varying sectors of the economy[4]. With increasing frequency, business and corporate leaders express concern for the viability of America's future workforce as a factor threatening our economic competitiveness[5].

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[4] In a 1987 volume produced by the Hudson Institute, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Labor titled "Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century", the urgency of providing "every child who reaches the age of seventeen between now and the year 2000" with the ability to "read sophisticated materials, write clearly, speak articulately, and solve complex problems requiring algebra and statistics" is emphasized as a prerequisite to achieving economic competitiveness and productivity. In a speech delivered November 18, 1992, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, past president of The Children's Defense Fund, emphasized the importance of American children to the country's social and economic well-being, and noted our failure to "do all we can" for them.

[5] In 1985 and 1987 the Committee for Economic Development (CED), an independent research and educational organization of over two hundred business executives and educators, released lengthy analyses and statements addressing problems faced by American children, and their central role in the future competitiveness of our economy. The concerns expressed by CED also appear in testimony presented to the House Committee on the Budget in March 1991, by executive officers and board chairpersons from five of America's largest corporations (AT&T, BellSouth Corporation, Honeywell, Inc., The Prudential Insurance Company of America and Sky Chefs). More recently a group of four corporate leaders (Hasbro, Inc., Stride Rite, Vidal Sassoon, and Sky Chefs, Inc.) met with top House and Senate leaders, and testified at a Budget Committee and House Select Committee on Hunger press conference to urge immediate action to address growing hunger and poverty among American children.

Driving concern that the well-being of our young is a critical factor in determining future social and economic health of the nation is the recognition that American children currently face rapidly escalating problems stemming from poverty (see, for example, recent reports from the National Commission on Children, the National Center for Children in Poverty, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the Children's Defense Fund, the Center for the Future of Children, the National Council of La Raza, and the Carnegie Corporation Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Children).

Child Poverty Reflects Growing Poverty Among Families

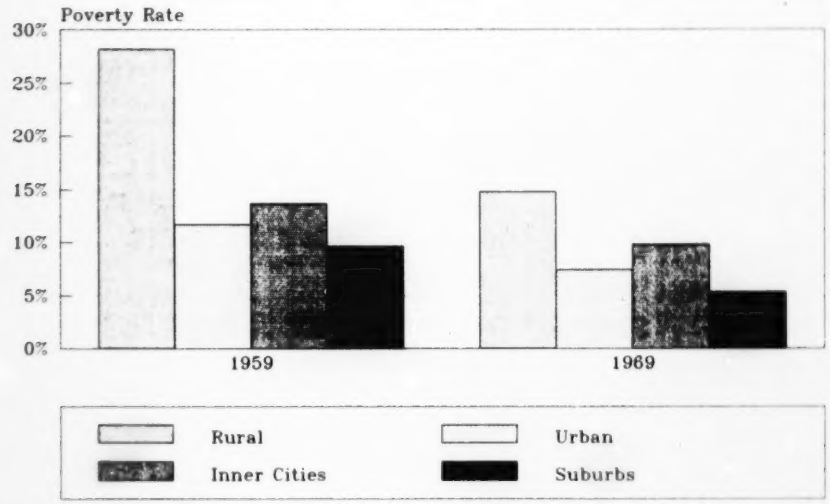
While poverty data by area of residence for children are not available for the entire period from 1959 to 1969, analysis of family poverty data for this period suggests that, while child poverty is linked to government social and economic policy, neither the effects of economic growth nor social policies influenced child poverty consistently within various areas of residence during the past three decades. Though the total number of families living in poverty was reduced by 37 percent from 1959 to 1969, the reduction among urban families was 22 percent while the number of rural families in poverty fell by over 48 percent (see Figure 2 below). Moreover, while the number of inner-city families in poverty declined by 20 percent over this period (the smallest improvement of all areas), poverty declined by 25 percent among suburban families.

Disparities in the reduction of the number of families in poverty during the 1960s was paralleled by similar differences in poverty rate changes. While the poverty rate for all families declined by 45 percent between 1959 and 1969, the proportion of urban families living in poverty declined by only 37 percent, while the poverty rate for rural families fell by 48 percent (see Figure 1 below). Also, the proportion of inner city families in poverty declined by just 28 percent, while the poverty rate among suburban families fell by 45 percent.

The different patterns of change in family and child poverty over previous decades reflect a host of economic and social factors leading to greater income disparities for residents within rural and urban areas, and within suburbs and inner-city areas. Structural changes within the American economy and work force have led to sharp declines in the base of manufacturing jobs within urban areas, and a severe erosion of wages. Increased concentration of agricultural production within a smaller number of farms, many owned by large corporations, together with increased mechanization and technological change, has caused losses of agriculture-related jobs in rural areas.

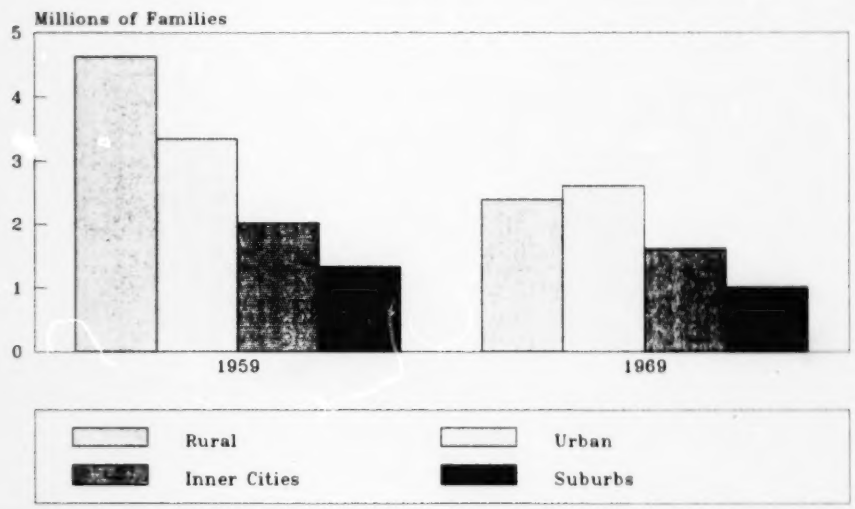
U.S. Family Poverty By Area, 1959–1969

Figure 1: Percent of Families



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census.
(All families)

Figure 2: Number of Families



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census.
(All families)

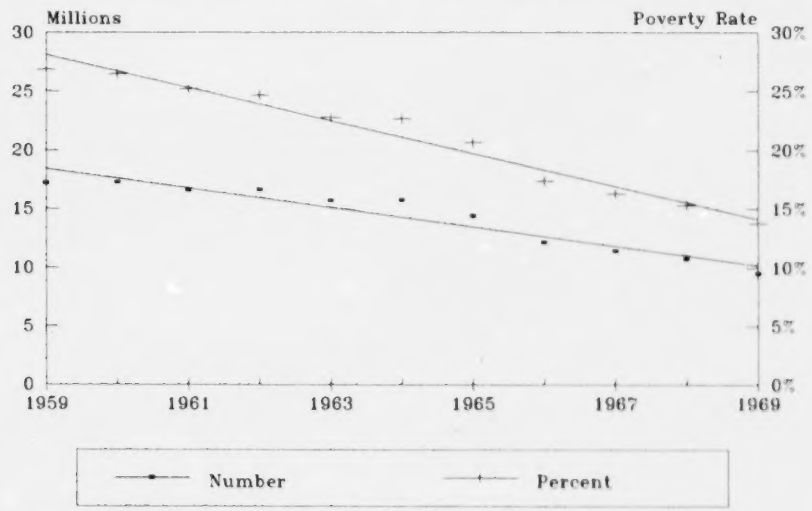
Child Poverty Also Reflects Economic and Policy Change

According to Census Bureau data, during the 1960s the total number of American children in families with incomes below the poverty level was reduced by 45.0 percent, going from 17.2 million in 1959 to 9.5 million in 1969 (see Figure 3 below). The poverty rate for children in families was reduced from 26.9 percent in 1959 to 13.8 percent in 1969 (see Figure 3 below). These dramatic reductions in childhood poverty occurred during a period of strong expansion in the American economy, accompanied by concerted governmental policy initiated to reduce poverty (5, pp. 300-301; 7, Ch. 1; 9). As will be seen below, however, the reductions in child poverty over this period did not last, either in rural or urban areas.

Except for the recession during the first two years of the decade, the 1960s were characterized by relatively high rates of growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and low rates of unemployment. Even during the 1960-61 recession, the overall unemployment rate did not exceed 6.5 percent, and was below 5.0 percent throughout the last half of the decade (5, pp. 300-301, 340). Moreover, compared to the following two decades, the rate of inflation was quite low during the 1960s (5, p. 302).

U.S. Child Poverty, 1959–1969

Figure 3: Number and Percent of Children



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
(Related children below age 18.)

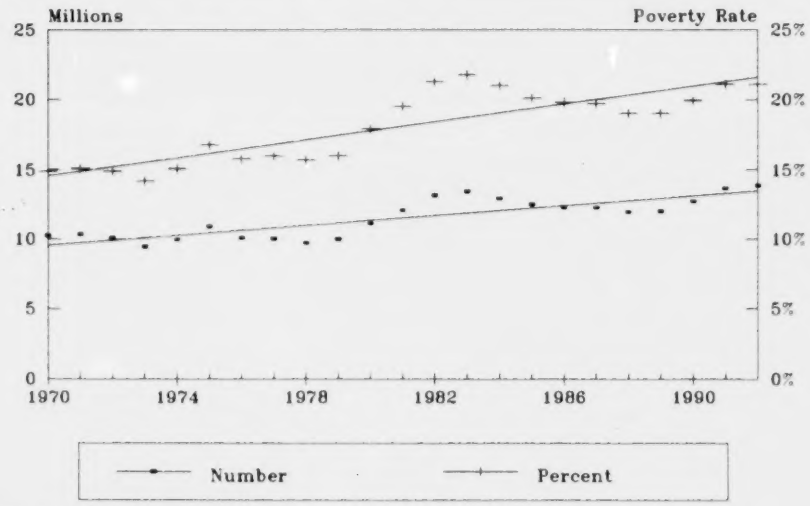
Both the short and long-term effects of governmental programs in the 1960s are still heavily debated. A Government Accounting Office (GAO) study conducted in 1969 reported "mismanagement, misdirection, and underachievement." It also found significant successes, and recommended continuation of the Office of Economic Opportunity and its administration of war on poverty programs (7; 9).

During the 1970s the downward trend in childhood poverty was reversed, with the percent of related children in poverty actually increasing by 20.1 percent from 1970 to 1980 (see Figure 4 below). At the start of the decade 14.9 percent of children were in poverty, dropping to 14.2 percent by 1973. Beginning in 1973, child poverty began to increase dramatically, and continued increasing throughout most of the remainder of the decade. The overall poverty rate for related children increased during the 1970s from 14.2 percent in 1973 to 17.9 percent in 1980 (see Figure 4).

During the next twelve years (1980-1992), the number of American children in impoverished families increased by another 25.2 percent. The number of poor children in families went from 11.1 million to 13.9 million, an increase of 2.8 million over the period (see Figure 4). At the end of this period, 21.1 percent of American children lived in poor families. As the trend lines for the data shown in Figure 4 indicate, the downward trend in child poverty achieved during the 1960s reversed during the 1970s, with child poverty increasing dramatically throughout much of the 1980s and early 1990s.

U.S. Child Poverty, 1970–1992

Figure 4: Number and Percent of Children



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
(Related children below age 18.)

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Performance of the U.S. economy during the 1970s was disappointing. The high rates of GDP growth in the 1960s were not repeated at any time during the 1970s. Overall unemployment rates were also higher during the 1970s than during the previous decade. Moreover, inflation increased at a very rapid pace during the latter half of the 1970s, partially as a result of increases in world petroleum prices.

Three recessions occurred during the period from 1980 to 1991 (5, p. 54). However after the recessions of 1980 and 1981-82, there were seven years of economic growth, ending with the recession which began in 1990. A major divergence from past economic trends occurred during this period with unemployment rates remaining unusually high for periods of economic growth (above 6.0 percent). Moreover, inflation continued to rise steadily through most of the period, leading to greater overall inflation during this period than during the 1970s (5, pp. 302-3).

At the start of the 1980s, the new Administration was committed to reducing the role of federal government antipoverty measures, and reducing government's size and level of activity generally. Some domestic programs were eliminated during these years, while funding for others was reduced.

Reductions in domestic programs, along with the two recessions early in the 1980s, continued changes in the structure of the American economy and work force, further decline in real wage levels, and major declines in the real value of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits, led to a surge in the number of children in poverty[6]. From 1980 to 1984 the number of American children in poor families increased by nearly 2 million. By 1983, 13.4 million American children were living in families with incomes below poverty level, the largest number since 1965 (See Appendix 1).

During the mid- to latter part of the 1980s, growth in the economy and reduction in unemployment, together with renewal of some funding for domestic programs by Congress, led to a reduction of approximately 1 million in the number of children living in poverty. The net change over these years was an overall increase of about 1 million more children in poverty in 1988 than in 1980. From 1988 to 1992, a combination of factors led to an increase of nearly 2 million American children in poverty (See Figure 4 and Appendix 1).

The essential issue, however, is that the ominous problem of increasing child poverty, within all areas of residence, is one which is linked with and susceptible to government policy. Domestic social and economic policy choices of the next few years provide the nation with a unique opportunity to reverse a twenty-year increase in poverty among America's children within rural and urban areas. How this is accomplished -- or whether it is -- remains to be seen.

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[6] See Section 7 of the 1993 Green Book of U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means for time-series data on AFDC benefits.

CHILD POVERTY TRENDS BY AREA OF RESIDENCE, 1973-1992

The overall poverty rate for children in American families increased by 48.6 percent over the base period used for the projections in this analysis (1973-1992). This dramatic overall increase was unevenly spread among children in rural and urban areas, however (see Figure 7 below).

Over the period from 1973 to 1992 the poverty rate for urban children in families increased by 58.7 percent, going from 13.1 percent in 1973 to 20.7 percent in 1992 (See Figures 5 and 7). This dramatic increase in the poverty rate for urban children reflected approximately 4.6 million more urban children living in impoverished families in 1992 than in 1973[7]. The overall trends in rural and urban child poverty rates are shown in Figure 5 below.

Separation of urban child poverty into its component parts (inner cities and suburbs) reveals startling differences in the change in child poverty between children living in inner cities and those living in suburban areas. The poverty rate for inner-city children increased by 55.9 percent from 1973 to 1992, and at 31.9 percent was still over twice the rate for children living in suburbs, and nearly one and a half times the rate for rural children at the end of the period (see Figures 6 and 8). Over 2.3 million more inner-city children were living in poor families at the end of this period than at the beginning.

Yet, the increase in the poverty rate among children living in suburban areas was even greater. From 1973 to 1992, the poverty rate for children in suburbs increased by over three quarters (76.4 percent), from 7.8 percent to 13.8 percent. This increase in the poverty rate for suburban children reflects approximately 2.2 million more children in poverty in 1992 than in 1973 (see Figures 6 and 8).

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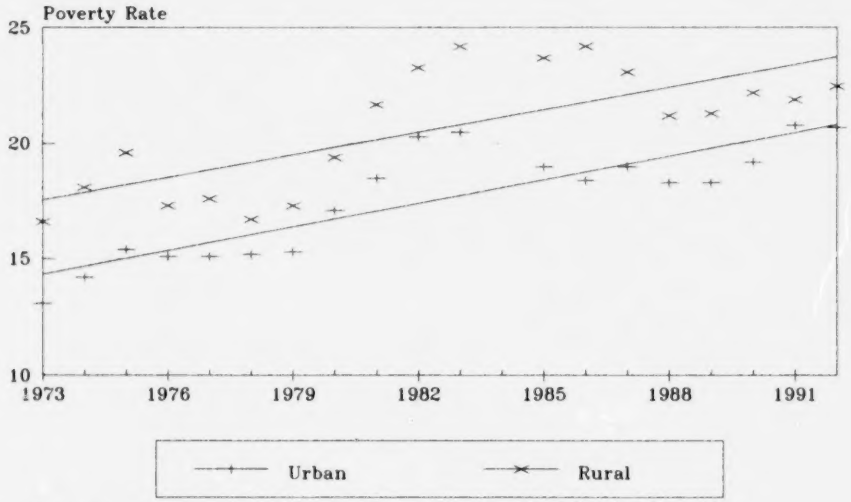
[7] In the mid-1980s the Census Bureau adjusted the definitions of metropolitan areas and the sampling frames for the Current Population Survey (CPS) to accommodate results from the 1980 decennial census. As a result of these changes, CPS poverty estimates for metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas covering years prior to 1984 are based on slightly different populations than estimates for later periods, and some caution is advised when comparing poverty levels from these different time periods. The difference in the size of the metropolitan population arising from the old and new sampling frames has been estimated by the Census Bureau to be from 0.4 to 1.0 percent. Comparisons of child poverty rates for periods before and after the sampling-fra ıe changes do not involve this difference however, and can be made with greater confidence.

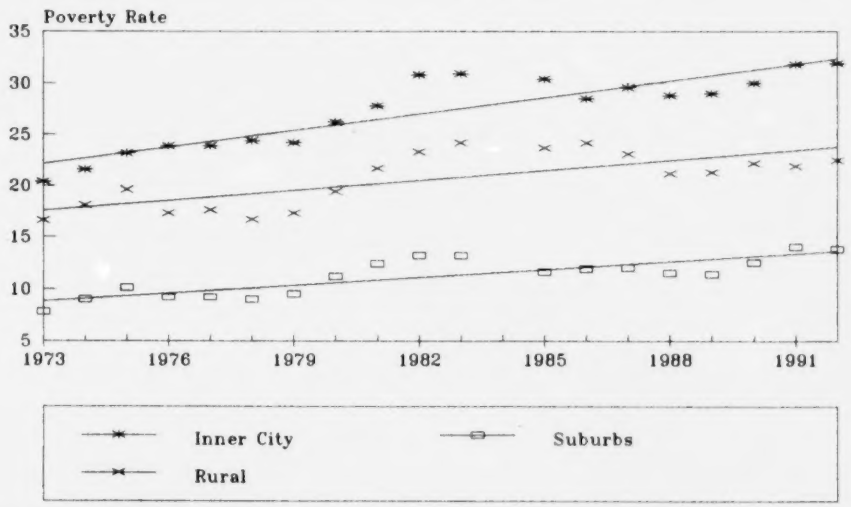
U.S. Child Poverty Trends, 1973–1992

Figure 5: Rural–Urban Child Poverty



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census.
(Related children below 18 years.)

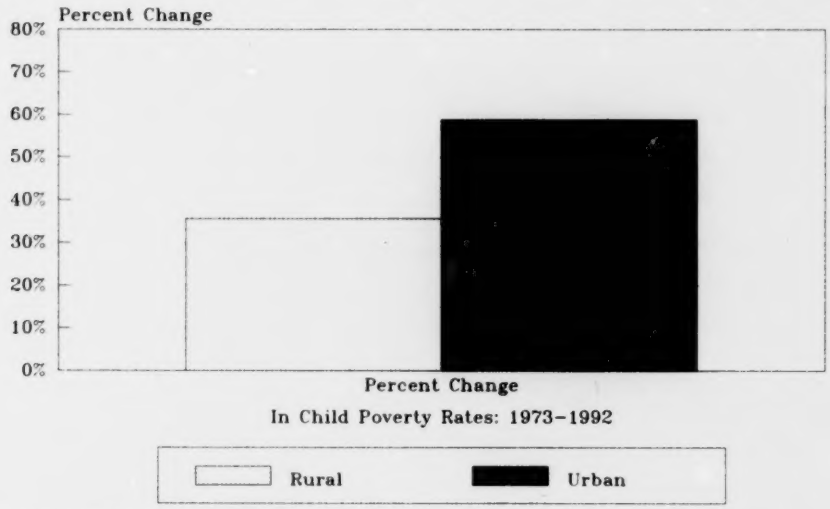
Figure 6: Rural, Inner–City, Suburban Poverty



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census.
(Related children below 18 years.)

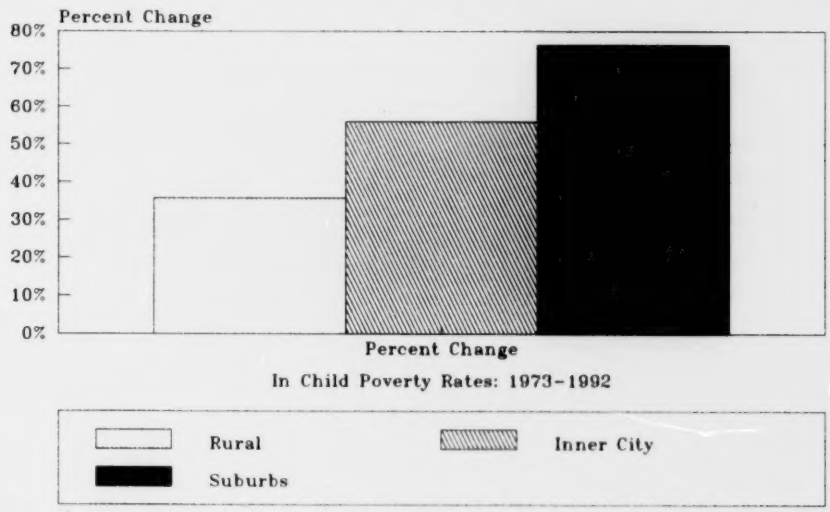
U.S. Child Poverty Change, 1973–1992

Figure 7: Change in Rural–Urban Poverty Rates



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
(Related children below age 18.)

Figure 8: Change in Poverty Rates by Area



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
(Related children below age 18.)

Rural child poverty also increased between 1973 and 1992, though the change in rural areas differed in nature from that in urban areas. The poverty rate for rural children increased by over a third (35.6 percent) over the period, going from 16.6 to 21.1 percent (see Figures 5-8 above). However, the number of rural children in poverty actually declined by approximately 5 percent. This seeming inconsistency arose due to a nearly 30 percent reduction in the number of children living in rural areas between 1973 and 1992. Thus, while there were fewer poor children in rural areas, the proportion of children living in rural areas who were poor actually increased[8].

The trends in child poverty rates within each area of residence over the period 1973-1992 are shown by the solid lines in Figures 5 and 6 above. As seen in Figure 6, the poverty rates in all three areas of residence show an increasing trend over the period. These trends provide the basis for the poverty rate projections presented in the following section (see the Technical Appendix for a description of the projection procedure).

The poverty rate projections shown in the following section are later applied to Census Bureau child population projections in order to obtain projections of the number of children in poverty in each area of residence out to the year 2010. The Census Bureau's child population projections were distributed across areas of residence on the basis of United Nations urbanization projections for the U.S., and recent trends in child population changes within American inner cities and suburbs. The population projections and distributions, and the projected poverty levels, are also shown in additional sections below.

[8] The overall decline in the rural child population may have occurred through a combination of some reclassification of areas from rural to suburban or urban, and actual demographic change in the population of existing rural areas. Actual change in the child population of rural areas would occur as a result of algebraic interactions among births, deaths, in-migration and out-migration within these areas. It is not possible to say with precision what proportion of the decline in the rural child population over this period resulted from each of the two primary sources of change.

PROJECTED CHILD POVERTY RATES BY AREA OF RESIDENCE, 1995-2010

Projected poverty rates for related children by area of residence for five year intervals out to the year 2010 are shown in Table 1 below . The Census Bureau child poverty rates for 1992 are also shown for comparison.

Table 1: Projected Poverty Rates for American Children
By Area of Residence, 1995-2010
(Base Period for Projections: 1973-1992)

Year	All Areas (%)	Urban (%)	Suburbs (%)	Inner City (%)	Rural (%)
1992 (Actual)	21.1	20.7	13.8	31.9	22.5
1995	22.2	21.9	14.8	33.7	23.4
2000	24.0	23.9	16.3	36.7	25.0
2005	25.8	26.0	17.9	39.7	26.5
2010	27.6	28.0	19.5	42.7	28.1

Source: Calculated using Census Bureau data.

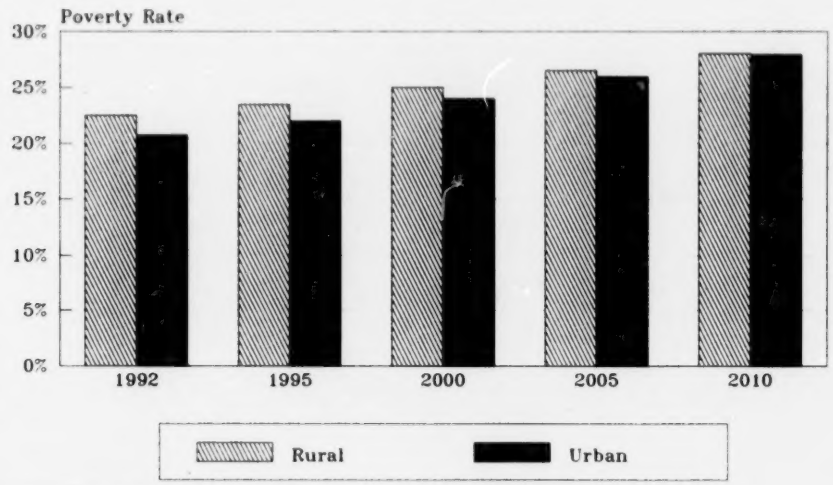
As seen in Table 1 above, and Figures 9 and 10 below, if child poverty trends of the past twenty years continue over the next two decades, the proportion of children in poverty in all areas of residence will have increased substantially by the year 2010. The overall poverty rate for urban children will overtake the poverty rate for rural children, which has historically been significantly higher.

The projected child poverty rates for each area of residence are shown graphically in Figures 9 and 10 below. The projected change in child poverty rates within each area over the period 1992-2010 are shown in Figures 11 and 12. As Figures 10 and 12 show, the proportion of suburban children in poverty will increase by 41 percent, reaching a poverty rate of nearly 20 percent in 2010. Over the same period the poverty rates for inner-city and rural children will increase by 34.0 percent and 24.9 percent respectively.

Under these conditions, by the year 2010 more than two out of every five inner-city children, and nearly one in every five suburban children will be living in poverty. In addition, more than one out of every four rural children will be impoverished. However, the greatest increase in child poverty rates will occur in the suburbs.

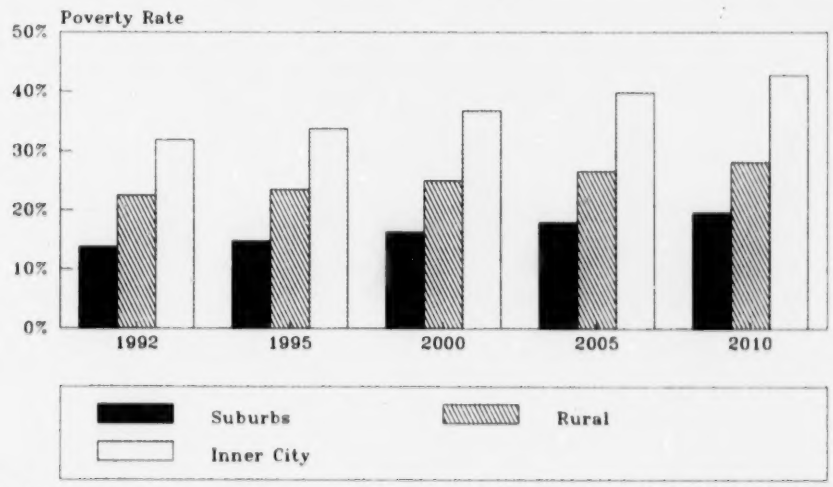
Projected Child Poverty Rates By Area

Figure 9: Rural–Urban Poverty Rates



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

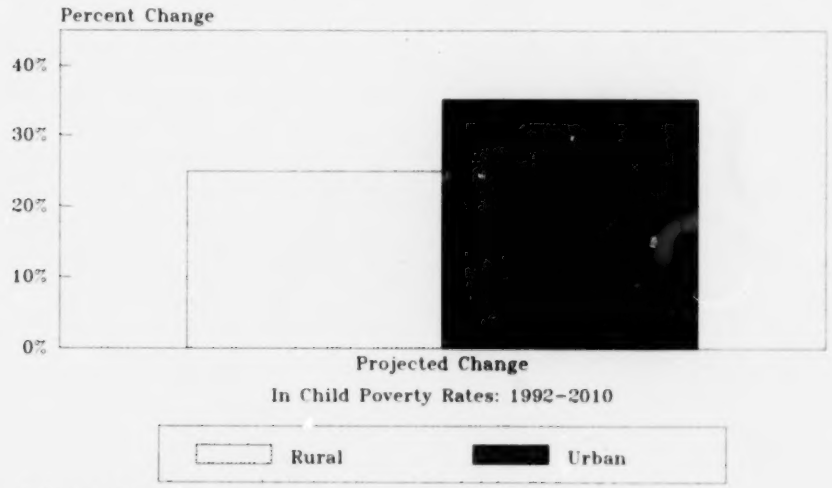
Figure 10: Rural, Inner–City, Suburban Rates



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

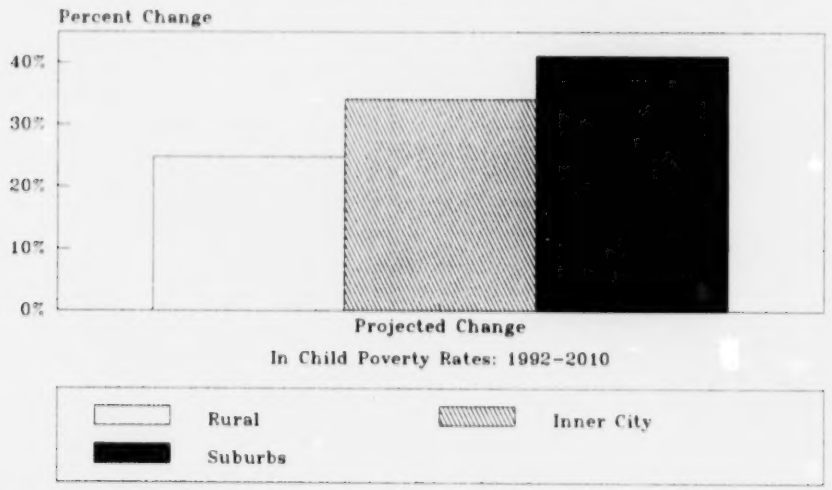
Projected Child Poverty Rate Changes

Figure 11: Rural–Urban Change



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

Figure 12: Rural, Inner–City, Suburban Change



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

PROJECTED CHILD POPULATION BY AREA OF RESIDENCE, 1995-2010

The number of children living in poverty within each area of residence in the future will depend on both the poverty rates and the size of the child population within each area. Table 2 below shows the latest Census Bureau projections of the total child population at five-year intervals to the year 2010, distributed by area of residence based on United Nations urbanization projections and recent growth trends in each area. The Census Bureau estimates of the number of children in each area of residence in 1992 are shown for comparison.

Table 2: Projected Number of Children In The U.S. Population
By Area of Residence: 1995-2010

Year	All Areas (1000s)	Urban (1000s)	Suburbs (1000s)	Inner City (1000s)	Rural (1000s)
1992 (Actual)	65,691	50,566	31,223	19,343	15,125
1995	68,679	53,173	33,251	20,172	15,257
2000	70,692	55,943	35,280	20,663	14,750
2005	71,761	57,757	36,899	20,858	14,004
2010	72,063	58,974	38,162	20,812	13,090

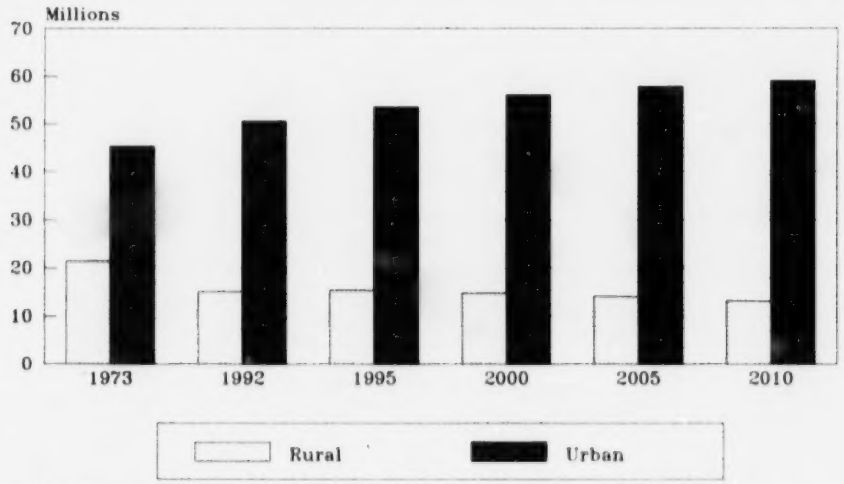
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, and distribution based on Census Bureau and United Nations data (All persons below 18 years of age.).

As seen in Table 2, the overall number of children in the U.S. is projected by the Census Bureau to increase by about 10 percent over the next two decades. Based on United Nations urbanization projections for the U.S., and recent growth trends in the child population within each area, the number of children living in the nation's urban areas will increase by about 17 percent by the year 2010, while the rural child population will decrease by nearly 14 percent (see Figures 13 and 15 below).

Separating the projected growth in the urban child population into inner-city and suburban components shows the largest growth occurring in the suburbs (see Figures 14 and 16). The total number of inner-city children is projected to increase by approximately 8 percent over the 1992 level by the year 2010, while the number of children living in suburban areas will increase by over 20 percent. Together, the increases in the suburban child population and poverty rates, lead to large increases in the number of poor children living in America's suburbs by the year 2010.

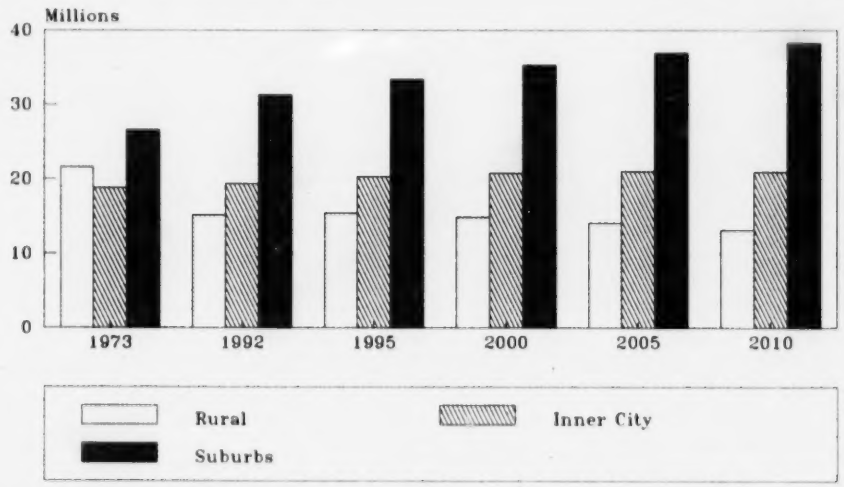
U.S. Child Population Trends By Area

Figure 13: Rural–Urban Child Population Trends



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
and the United Nations.
(All children below age 18.)

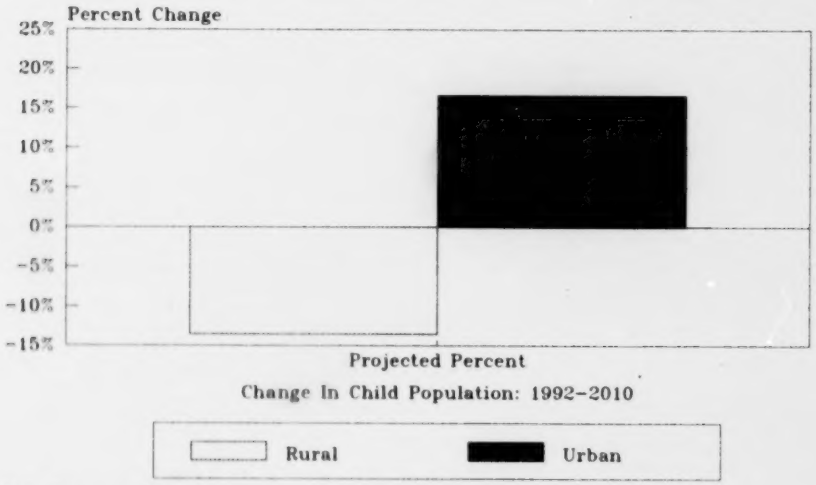
Figure 14: Inner City, Suburban, Rural Trends



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
and the United Nations.
(All children below age 18.)

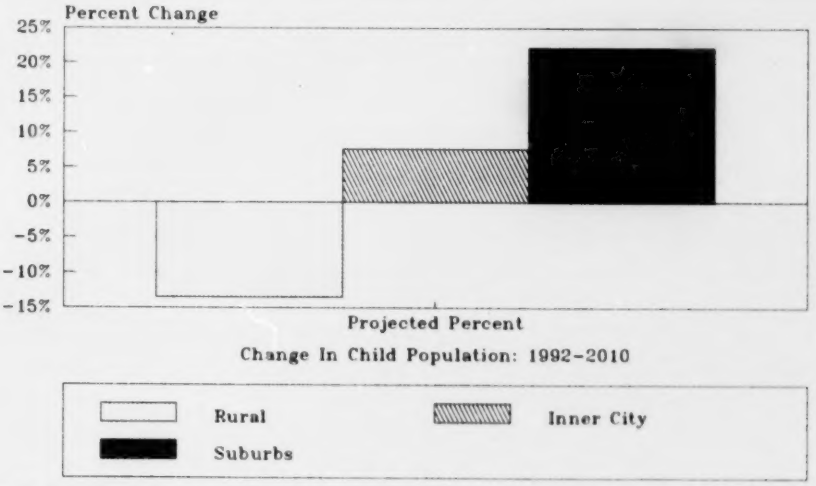
Projected U.S. Child Population Change

Figure 15: Rural–Urban Change



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
and the United Nations.
(All children below age 18.)

Figure 16: Rural, Inner–City, Suburban Change



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
and the United Nations.
(All children below age 18.)

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PROJECTED NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY BY AREA OF RESIDENCE, 1995-2010

Table 3 shows the projected number of children in poverty at five year intervals to the year 2010. Census Bureau estimates of child poverty within each area of residence for 1992 are shown for comparison.

If the trends in child poverty of the past twenty years continue, the total number of American children living in impoverished families will increase by 44 percent, reaching 20 million by the year 2010. The number of poor children living in America's urban areas will increase by nearly 58 percent over the 1992 level, reaching 16.4 million in 2010. Though the poverty rate for rural children will continue to increase (as shown in Table 1 and Figures 9-12 above), the accompanying decline in rural child population over the period will result in a relatively constant number of poor children living in rural areas.

Table 3: Projected Number of American Children In Poverty
By Area of Residence: 1995-2010

Year	All Areas (1000s)	Urban (1000s)	Suburbs (1000s)	Inner City (1000s)	Rural (1000s)
1992(Actual)	13,876	10,475	4,313	6,162	3,401
1995	15,300	11,700	4,900	6,800	3,600
2000	17,100	13,400	5,800	7,600	3,700
2005	18,600	14,900	6,600	8,300	3,700
2010	20,100	16,400	7,500	8,900	3,700

Source: Calculated using Census Bureau and United Nations data.
(Related children below 18 years of age.)
(Projected levels rounded to nearest 100 thousands.)

Separating the projected urban child poverty level into inner-city and suburban components reveals a startling divergence in growth of child poverty within these two areas (see Figures 18 and 20 below). While the number of inner-city children in poor families will increase by over 44 percent, reaching 8.9 million by the year 2010, *the number of suburban children in poverty will increase by nearly three fourths (72.4 percent), reaching 7.5 million.*

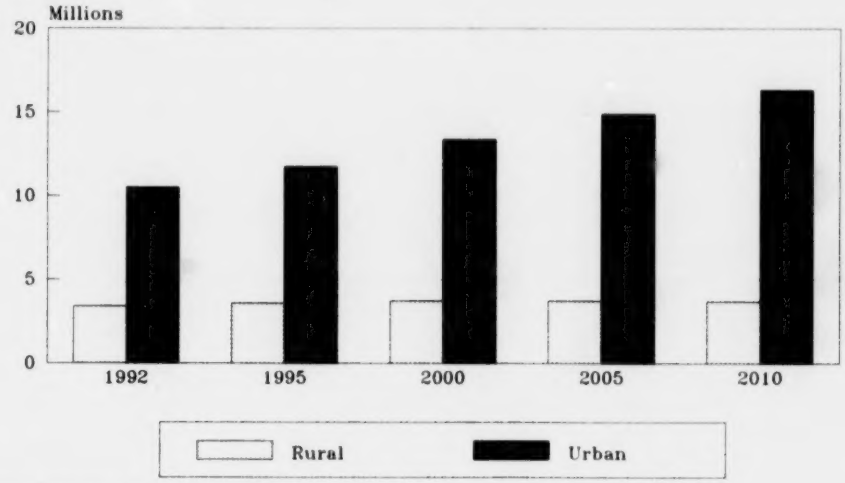
This amounts to 3.2 million more poor children in the suburbs, and 2.7 million more poor inner-city children in 2010 than in 1992. Moreover, *over half of the 6.2 million additional children living in poverty in 2010 will be living in suburban areas once believed immune to poverty and its associated hardship and social problems.*

While the number of children living in rural areas will actually decline by about 14 percent by 2010, the number of rural children in poverty will increase by more than 8 percent, as the rural child poverty rate continues to increase. This will lead to 3.7 million poor rural children in the year 2010.

In 1992 the number of poor children living in the suburbs was about 70 percent of the number living in inner cities. By 2010 that ratio will have increased to more than 84 percent. This and the other projections shown above represents a disturbing trend for all American children, and especially for children living in suburbs and inner cities. America's children are literally our future. The future well-being of our nation's social and economic systems, and of all its citizens, depends on these trends being reversed.

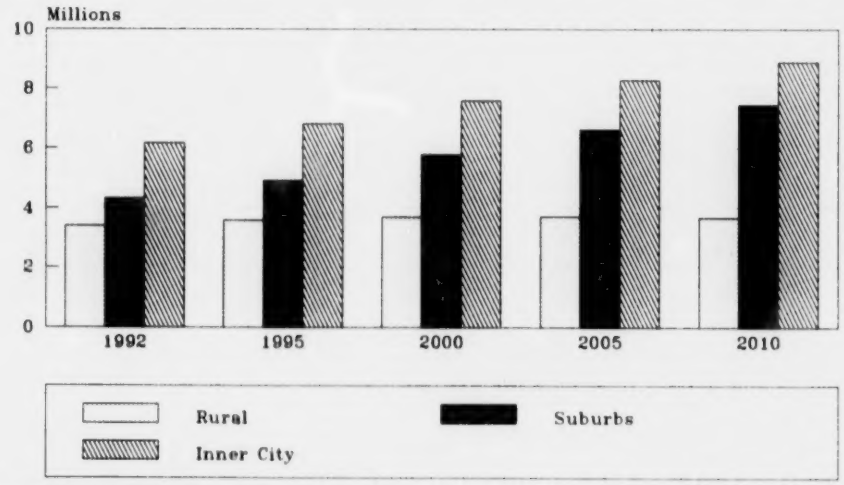
Projected Child Poverty Levels By Area

Figure 17: Rural-Urban Poverty Levels



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

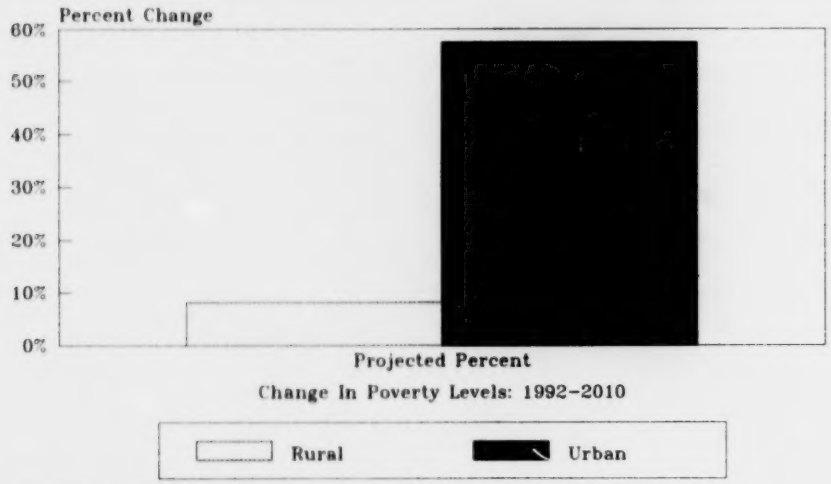
Figure 18: Rural, Inner-City, Suburban Levels



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

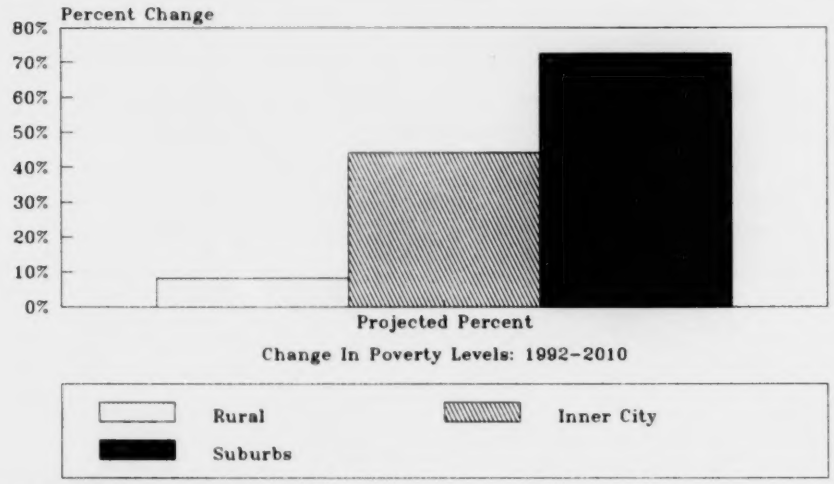
Projected Child Poverty Level Changes

Figure 19: Rural–Urban Change



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

Figure 20: Rural, Inner–City, Suburban Change



Source: Calculated based on Census Bureau and United Nations data. (Related children below age 18.)

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POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This analysis indicates that America is heading into the next century plagued by a mounting problem of devastating proportions. Americans are being divided into two countries. In one there are families with resources which, though shrinking for many, are enough to keep them and their children out of poverty. But in the other America, poverty and all the desperation that accompanies it is growing.

If America continues to allow more children to slide into poverty, we may be heading for crises in our labor force, our educational system, and our economic and social well-being. Increasing costs associated with growing numbers of disadvantaged American children are likely to overwhelm our educational and social services systems as we enter the twenty-first century. We will also seriously harm U.S. competitiveness by our failure to prepare large numbers of children for workforce productivity.

To date, efforts to provide educational programs and health services for children disadvantaged by nutritional and social deficits associated with poverty have only had to target relatively small student subpopulations. If child poverty continues to follow recent trends, schools in many areas of the U.S. will be required to provide such educational and health programs for student bodies in which disadvantaged children comprise the majority. This is especially likely to be the case in urban areas. Moreover, the need for such services and programs will not be limited to inner-cities, but will also extend to the suburbs.

Dealing with America's child poverty problems requires social and economic policies which make it possible for families with at least one full-time worker to earn enough to stay out of poverty. Recent expansions and innovations in use of the earned income tax credit (EITC) may go a long way toward meeting this goal. Reform of the minimum wage structure to make it more commensurate with income levels required for minimum economic self-sufficiency, and which prevent its erosion due to inflation, could also help.

The well-being of children must become part of all policy debate, whether it is about health care, food assistance or welfare reform. New policies or programs cannot eliminate child poverty overnight; strong and creative leadership is also required from our political leaders and policy makers. Short-term issues of cost and efficiency, though important, must not be allowed to stifle creative responses to th[illegible] urgent situation. Every additional child falling into poverty multiplies the future costs associated with inaction. We either pay now or pay much more later.

The nation has an immediate and inescapable child poverty problem for which it must assume responsibility now. Failure to protect American children from poverty is a certain peril to their well-being, and one of the most serious threats to the moral and economic strength of this country.

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Appendix 1

Number and Percent of American Children in Poverty By Area of Residence Related Children Below Age 18: 1973–1992

	Number of Children					Percent of Children				
Year	Total (1000s)	Urban (1000s)	Inner City (1000s)	Suburbs (1000s)	Rural (1000s)	Total (%)	Urban (%)	Inner City (%)	Suburbs (%)	Rural (%)
1973	9,453	5,889	3,816	2,072	3,564	14.2%	13.1%	20.4%	7.8%	16.6%
1974	10,196	6,259	3,905	2,354	3,937	15.5%	14.2%	21.6%	9.0%	18.1%
1975	10,882	6,646	4,047	2,599	4,236	16.8%	15.4%	23.2%	10.1%	19.6%
1976	10,081	6,376	4,017	2,350	3,714	15.8%	15.1%	23.9%	9.2%	17.3%
1977	10,028	6,208	3,949	2,259	3,820	16.0%	15.1%	23.9%	9.2%	17.6%
1978	9,722	6,218	3,986	2,232	3,504	15.7%	15.2%	24.4%	9.0%	16.7%
1979	9,993	6,190	3,855	2,335	3,548	16.0%	15.3%	24.2%	9.5%	17.3%
1980	11,114	7,024	4,236	2,788	4,091	17.9%	17.1%	26.2%	11.2%	19.4%
1981	12,068	7,545	4,478	3,067	4,523	19.5%	18.5%	27.8%	12.4%	21.7%
1982	13,139	8,283	5,089	3,194	4,856	21.3%	20.3%	30.8%	13.2%	23.3%
1983	13,326	8,337	5,171	3,166	4,989	21.7%	20.5%	30.9%	13.2%	24.2%
1984	12,929					21.0%				
1985	12,483	9,035	5,694	3,341	3,448	20.1%	19.0%	30.4%	11.6%	23.7%
1986	12,257	8,744	5,285	3,459	3,513	19.8%	18.4%	28.5%	11.9%	24.2%
1987	12,435	9,066	5,619	3,447	3,369	20.0%	19.0%	29.6%	12.0%	23.1%
1988	11,935	8,833	5,487	3,347	3,102	19.0%	18.3%	28.8%	11.5%	21.2%
1989	12,001	8,891	5,506	3,385	3,110	19.0%	18.3%	29.0%	11.4%	21.3%
1990	12,715	9,479	5,708	3,771	3,236	19.9%	19.2%	30.0%	12.5%	22.2%
1991	13,658	10,447	6,095	4,352	3,211	21.1%	20.8%	31.8%	14.0%	21.9%
1992	13,876	10,475	6,162	4,313	3,401	21.1%	20.7%	31.9%	13.8%	22.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census. Note that the metro and nonmetro definitions changed in 1985, and the poverty levels prior to 1984 are not strictly comparable with the numbers of children in poverty after 1984. Due to this sampling frame change, child poverty estimates were not reported by the Census Bureau in 1984 by area of residence.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Projection Method and Data Sources

The method used in this analysis is based on a linear trend projection of childhood poverty rates. Beginning with a base periods, an average annual absolute increment in the poverty rate is calculated for that period. The projection of the poverty rate to any year is then calculated by multiplying the number of years covered by the projection, times the average absolute increment, and adding that amount to the starting value (in this case, the 1992 rates). The projected childhood poverty rates thus obtained are then applied to the most recent Census Bureau population projections for related children below age eighteen, to obtain projected numbers of children in poverty in each desired year up to 2010 for the nation as a whole[9].

An additional, intermediate set of steps are necessary to obtain poverty-level estimates for each primary area of residence. The Census Bureau's aggregate child population projections are first distributed across rural and urban areas on the basis of the United Nations' most recent urbanization rate projections for the U.S. Following this, the trend in change in the child population within U.S. inner cities and suburban areas over the period 1973-1992 is used as the basis for distributing the resulting urban child population across these two subareas. The child population projections thus obtained for each primary area of residence are then applied to the child poverty rate projections to derive the final poverty-level projections for each area.

The projections thus produced assume that childhood poverty rates in America will change in the future by average, constant annual amounts from the respective base period. The base period used for the projections is 1973-1992. This period was chosen to maintain consistency with previous "Two Americas" reports. The base period in earlier reports begins with 1973 because that is the first year for which data are available for children of Hispanic origin. The base period ends with 1992 because that is the most recent year for which Census Bureau poverty data were available at the time the analyses were done.

The data used in this analysis are from volumes published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and come from the Current Population Survey. All data sources are cited in the references provided below. A summary of the data used is included in Appendix 1.

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[9] The Census Bureau produces population projections by single year age intervals for each year from 1992 to 2000. However, beyond the year 2000 projections are only provided for every fifth year (e.g., 2005, 2010, 2015, etc.).

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We express appreciation to the panel of advisors who have reviewed the preparation of this analysis. The final product, however, is the work of the Center, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the advisors themselves.

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